



[G W F Hegel, 1770-1831](#)

Extracts about Being, Essence and Notion

This is the halfway point in our course on Hegel. Our mission is to thoroughly study and understand the whole of Hegel's Logic. How are we getting on?

Thanks to Andy Blunden's lecture we got an overview of Hegel's Logic in the previous post. In his next two lectures, Andy returns to the sequence Being-Essence-Notion in more detail.

What have we been doing so far? We have not been reading whole books of Hegel. We are not at the stage where we can, as Tony Buzan would have it, skip over the difficult bits and come back later to fill in the gaps. We are still in the situation where, when reading Hegel, we find that most of it is

incomprehensible, and only intelligible in spots, here and there. So we are making a virtue of that, and:

- We are taking mostly relatively short spots of Hegel, learning how to handle them, locate them, begin to absorb them, and become familiar with them.
- We are also looking for any kind of overview material, including contents pages, as well as material like Andy Blunden's summarising lecture on Being, Essence and Notion. The overviews will give us clues as to where to locate the small pieces that we are picking up.
- We are not forgetting, also, that this is the Communist University, and that what we do here is to set things up for live dialogue between real people. We have done so, and we will continue to do it. It remains for the recipients of these posts to organise their Freirean dialogues around the material.

Today's main item consists of eleven short extracts from various works of Hegel that are given by Andy Blunden in broad support of his lecture on Being, Essence and Notion. They are from the *Shorter Logic*, the *Philosophy of Right*, the *Phenomenology*, the *Science of Logic* and the *History of Philosophy*.

Perhaps this is an appropriate time to make some provisional general remarks.

Hegel describes a movement through history that does not

discard the past but treats it as a component part of the present and of the future.

Further: *“[Hegel]’s supreme merit, as far as ethics and social and political philosophy are concerned, is that the concrete universal explicates affirmative intersubjective relations and makes possible an account of social institutions that is a third alternative to abstract atomic individualism and collectivist communitarianism.”* [Hegel’s Ethics of Recognition, p. 112, Williams 1997]

If all this is so, then Hegel has given us a way of seeing life that was not available before, and is better than what was before. The individual is at last reconciled with the collective.

Hegel does not lean on any *“a priori”*, presupposition, or Prime Mover. Hegel shows how creation of something from nothing is a daily occurrence. It is commonplace.

Nothing so created is lost, and accumulated quantity will, at a measurable moment, generate qualitative change.

This new vision clarifies things that Euclidean geometry and its logical cousins cannot clarify, or even see at all.

Hegel talks of Spirit, was classified as an Idealist, and was followed by noisy “materialists” such as Feuerbach. These and other things, not least of them the sheer difficulty of reading Hegel directly, have led people to misunderstand Hegel, who does not oppose the material against the

spiritual. On the contrary, Hegel solves the contradiction between the material and the spiritual.

In Hegel, the human is both the creator, and the created. Subject becomes Object, and *vice versa*.

“Materialists” think that they have solved the dichotomy of mind and matter by awarding priority to matter. But all this does is to replace a divine creator with an inanimate one, thus perpetuating a “Big Bang” type of theory and continuing to fail to explain creation as a constant, continuing and necessary presence.

In this way “materialists” become a version of what they thought they had overthrown. They continue to lack a strong theory of development, progress, or revolution. Karl Marx understood all this very well, as can be seen in all his work, from the “[Theses on Feuerbach](#),” onwards.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Excerpts from Hegel on Being, Essence and Notion](#).
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